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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, April 1, 1929.

Not for publication

Subject: "Betty Lou Plans a Dinner for April Fool's Day." Menu and recipes from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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"I'll bet a cooky," said Betty Lou's dad, "I'll bet a cooky that nobody can put anything over on me this April Fool's day. You needn't put salt in the sugar bowl -- I'm on to that; don't offer me any chocolate-coated laundry soap -- I won't bite. Please understand that I'm impervious to all April Fool jokes this year -- so don't waste your talent on me."

After making this hard-boiled statement, Betty Lou's dad stuck his paper in his pocket and went to work.

Betty Lou turned to her mother. "Do you suppose he really is impervious -- whatever that means?"

"Of course not," said Betty Lou's mother, "he just thinks he is. What shall we do -- to prove he's wrong?"

Betty Lou put her wits to work. She thought and she thought. "Let's do something different," she said. "Do you remember the dinner we had at Cousin Mary's? Cousin Mary served a fried rabbit and almost everybody thought it was chicken. Let's get a rabbit dinner for dad -- and see what we shall see."

"Good," said Betty Lou's mother. "Let's try out a new recipe on him. I have one for Braised Lettuce. Know how your dad fairly bristles, whenever he's reminded to eat his lettuce? Let's see what he says about this method of cook-
ing lettuce. Any more suggestions?"

"Grapefruit with honey," said Betty Lou. "One time I ate grapefruit with honey -- My! it was good. And let's have some of the rhubarb jelly I made. Dad doesn't know there is such a thing as rhubarb jelly, made with pectin."

Betty Lou and her mother talked over their plans, and before long they had evolved this menu for April Fool's Day: Fried Rabbit; Braised Lettuce; Scalloped Potatoes; Rhubarb Jelly; and Grapefruit with Honey. Sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

Betty Lou went to market and bought a rabbit. Perhaps I'd better tell you before we watch Betty Lou get dinner, that domestic rabbit meat is delicious, tender, and fine flavored, so if you are not especially fond of the "gamey" flavor of wild rabbit, or if you object to getting buckshot between your teeth, you will find domestic rabbit meat much more to your liking. You need not wait

till the hunting season opens to eat rabbit, for there is a continuous open season on domestic rabbits. The meat is good every month of the year. Few housewives are familiar with the food value and delicious flavor of domestic rabbit meat. Domestic rabbits are cleanly in habits, and the nature of their food makes the meat sweet, tender, and excellently flavored. It can better be compared with chicken, than with wild rabbit. Just as with poultry or various cuts of meat, young tender rabbits may be fried or roasted, while the older ones, with tougher muscles, need longer, moist cooking.

But that's enough, about rabbits in general. We must follow the fortunes of Betty Lou and see whether she was able to fool her dad.

She bought a rabbit -- a young, domestic rabbit, and she fried it a tempting golden brown. Let me give you her recipe for Fried Rabbit. Five ingredients for Fried Rabbit;

1 young domestic rabbit	1/2 cup flour, and
1 egg	1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup milk	

Five ingredients for Fried Rabbit: (Repeat)

I'll tell you how Betty fried the rabbit. First, she wiped it off well, with a damp cloth. Then she cut it into serving portions -- two fore legs, two hind legs, and then she cut the back crosswise, into two or three pieces; three pieces, I think, because this was a rather large rabbit. Then, when the rabbit was all cut up, she made a smooth batter to dip the rabbit in. She made the batter by beating the egg, adding the 1/4 cup milk and the salt, and stirring this into the 1/2 cup flour. Sometimes it's necessary to add one or two extra tablespoons of milk, but the coating must be thick enough to cover the pieces of rabbit. Next, Betty Lou heated well-flavored fat in a heavy iron skillet, and put in the pieces of rabbit, after they had been dipped in the batter. She cooked the rabbit until it was tender, from 25 to 30 minutes, and lightly browned on both sides. It was served on a hot platter, and garnished with parsley.

Betty Lou made gravy, by using two tablespoons of the fat in which the rabbit was cooked, and blending it with 1-1/2 tablespoons of flour and 1 cup of milk. Two tablespoons of fat, one and one-half tablespoons of flour and one cup of milk -- that's correct. Cook until thickened, add one tablespoon of finely chopped parsley, one-fourth teaspoon salt, and a dash of pepper. Serve with the rabbit.

Now let me see -- what was next on the menu? Scalloped Potatoes -- Betty Lou used the radio cookbook recipe for the Scalloped Potatoes; she says it's the only recipe she ever used, which tells how to make Scalloped Potatoes so they won't curdle.

She had a new recipe for Braised Lettuce. It proved so popular that -- but I'm getting ahead of my story. You must have the recipe first, for Braised Lettuce. Four ingredients for Braised Lettuce.

2 large hard heads of iceberg lettuce
4 tablespoons bacon fat
Salt, and a
Dash of pepper.

Four ingredients, for Braised Lettuce: (Repeat)

Cut each head of lettuce into four pieces, taking care that a portion of the center stem is left on each section, to hold the leaves together. Heat the fat in a large skillet, put in the lettuce, cover, and cook for 30 minutes, or until the lettuce is tender. Turn carefully, if necessary. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and serve on a hot platter. Pour a little melted butter over the top of the lettuce, if more richness is desired. If you've never tried it you'll be surprised, how very good this delicate-flavored vegetable is, cooked this way.

What's next? Grapefruit with honey. As it is served, the grapefruit looks just like ordinary grapefruit, but it has a delicious honey flavor. Simply pour a tablespoon of honey into the center of each half a grapefruit, after the seeds and pithy center have been removed, and the sections cut for serving.

Now, let's collect this menu again: Fried Rabbit; Braised Lettuce; Scaloped Potatoes; Rhubarb Jelly; and Grapefruit with Honey.

When Betty Lou's dad sat down to the table, he looked suspiciously about him. Memories of past April Fool jokes rose up before him. He tested the chair, before he sat down. Gingerly he took a sip of water. Carefully he unfolded his napkin -- no, there was nothing in it to make him jump. Well, well -- perhaps his family was growing up -- done with the childish pranks which make a dignified middle-aged man feel foolish.

"Fried chicken!" said dad. "Well, if this isn't a pleasant surprise!"

Betty Lou looked at her mother -- and her mother looked at Betty Lou.

"Say, this is a good meal. You may think it's treason, mother, but I'm glad you aren't having lettuce. I like lettuce, and I know it's 'good for me' -- but -- what's this new vegetable anyway? Let's have some of that."

Betty Lou passed the Braised Lettuce, and dad took a second helping. Betty Lou's brother, who was in on the secret, was so overcome that he almost choked on a drink of water.

"A very, very good dinner," said Dad, when the grapefruit was brought on, "Now what kind of grapefruit is this? It tastes like -- like honey. Mighty fine flavor."

It was some time after dinner that dad went to the kitchen to get a drink of water. When he came back to the living room, he stood for a moment, with his hand behind him.

"I have a strong suspicion," said dad, "that I have been fooled."

"Fooled?" said Betty Lou. "Why, dad, you said, you couldn't be fooled — you're impervious!"

"Nevertheless," said dad, "I have every reason to believe that what I thought was chicken, was something else. Here is the evidence."

He held up before his family, the furry foot of a rabbit.

"It just goes to prove," said dad resignedly, "what an absent-minded, gullible creature I am. It goes to prove that you can fool some of the people all of the time -- or at least as often as April Fool's day rolls around."

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Tomorrow: "Saving Money on the Ice Bill."

